



FRIENDS OF FITZGERALD MARINE LIFE REFUGE

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September 18, 2003

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Ms. Stephanie Harlan
Chair, Sanctuary Advisory Council
Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary
299 Foam Street
Monterey, CA 93940

Dear Ms. Harlan,

The Board of the Friends of the Fitzgerald Marine Life Refuge wishes to voice its strong support of a total ban of Personal Watercraft (PWC) in the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. We understand that a policy is currently being considered to allow PWC tow-in surfing at Mavericks on days with exceptionally large waves. Mavericks is immediately adjacent to the southern boundary of the Fitzgerald Refuge and we emphasize no matter what accommodation is provided for tow-in surfing, PWCs should absolutely be kept outside the Refuge's boundaries.

It is well documented that PWCs are notoriously disruptive to marine wildlife and dangerous to humans that ride them and come in contact with them. Our members have personally seen harbor seal haul outs in the Fitzgerald Marine Refuge rendered totally chaotic by the too near approach of PWCs. The immediate consequence of such disruption is obvious, what is not as readily observed is the elevation in the stress levels of these marine mammals that negatively affects every aspect of their biology. There are five harbor seal haul outs in the Refuge, all within 3 kilometers of Mavericks. The two closest haul outs to Mavericks are the main pupping and molting areas for the seals, since they are the farthest away from visitor impact that takes place at the North end of the Refuge. The two Southern most haul outs are within 1.5 kilometers of Mavericks. This year we had about 11 pups born in the reserve during March, April and a few in May.

In addition to the harbor seals, Fitzgerald provides refuge to large numbers of California sea lions during their annual migration and has had up to 18 sea otters in residence for extended periods. These vulnerable marine mammals and the many resident and transient birds represent just some of the wildlife threatened by PWCs in the Refuge. This is not ancient history; PWCs were in the Refuge as recently as last week with the predictable disruptive effect. We feel there is no justifiable reason to allow PWCs to enter the Refuge's boundaries, and allowing their presence at Mavericks invites their continued transgression into the Refuge.

The accumulation of negative, disruptive experiences with PWCs and documented evidence led NOAA to ban all PWC use in the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary. We believe that PWCs should likewise be excluded from the entire MBNMS, except for public agency search and rescue efforts. We urge your support for this measure.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janine Miller".

Janine Miller
President of the Board
Friends of Fitzgerald Marine Life Refuge

CC: Mr. Bill Douros
Mr. Daniel Basta
Ms. Susan Danielson